

**NOTES OF MEETING - UCU JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE (JNC)**

**Date:** 10 February 2022

**Present:** Damian McAlister (People & Culture); Paul Davidson (People & Culture); Mark Latuske (People & Culture); Tina Gallagher (People & Culture); Kathryn Wills (People & Culture); Linda Moore (UCU); Aisling O'Beirn (UCU), Adrian Grant (UCU); Paddy Mackel (UCU).

**In Attendance:** Angela Getty (People & Culture); Brian McAuley (Director of Faculty Operations, LHS); Christine Irwin (People & Culture).

**Apologies:** No Apologies.

**Format:** Meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

**22.01 Welcome and Housekeeping**

Mr McAlister welcomed all to the meeting.

**22.02 Minutes of JNC 25 November 2021**

Mr McAlister asked for points of accuracy for the minutes 25 November 2021.

*21.20 Implementation of Blackboard Ally:* to be amended to read 'Mr Jaffrey confirmed', rather than 'it was confirmed'.

*21.25: Academic Promotions: to read* 'UCU requested that figures be expressed as numbers and percentages, rather than just numbers'.

**22.03 Matters arising**

*21.22 Gender Pay* Mr McAlister advised that he had not yet sent out dates for a meeting to discuss gender pay but will prioritise for mid-March. Mr McAlister to send out proposed date for meeting. UCU agreed to set aside time outside of JUCNC for this discussion.

*21.23 Research Staff Promotions.* The issue of promotion scheme for Contract Research Staff (CRS) to be raised at PEC meeting on 21 February 2022. Mr Davidson advised that consideration will be given to running the current Research Promotions scheme once more, possibly after Easter, and incorporating CRS Promotions into a wider review, along with Academic Promotions. UCU asked whether successful awards would be backdated for pay increments. Mr McAlister advised that this would be considered.

**22.04 Academic Promotions (info following recent round)**

Due to outstanding UCU queries relating to the data provided following the most recent Academic Promotions round, Angela Getty has been invited to respond directly to UCU on this matter.

Ms O'Beirn left the meeting.

Ms Getty talked through the figures relating to the recent promotions round.

UCU advised that they needed detail re fractional contracts / part time staff and that they were concerned that part-time staff are less likely to be promoted because of how the scheme runs. Ms Getty advised that anyone employed on a contract of over 16 hours is considered as a full-time member staff, as defined for, and by, equality data reporting.

Ms Getty advised that the data could be looked at by Job category.

UCU asked for the data by Gender, Community Background and Dependents. Without breaching confidentiality, Ms Getty advised that she would provide as much as she could.

UCU and Ms Getty to have a meeting outside of JNC to better understand the data and what can be provided.

Mr McAlister advised that he was committed to transparency of data in line with the organisational value of integrity.

Ms O'Beirn returned to the meeting.

#### **22.05 Setting & agreeing agenda items**

Mr McAlister proposed that the provision and sharing of info could be done 2-3 weeks before JNC, to ensure JNC was results orientated, and to maximise both input and discussion by all.

UCU advised that meetings were not as effective as they could be as they were responding to items on which they believed that they had not been consulted upon. Items are heard for the first time and an initial response given by UCU with no opportunity for follow up. If time was taken on work in advance of the meeting it would have to be on the proviso that it didn't restrict matters being discussed and that the agenda could be added to, edited or removed.

Mr McAlister advised that he was addressing how P&C presented as well as the Unions. Clarity on items for consultation, engagement and negotiation, and how the JNC operates is needed.

Mr Davidson asked that a few paragraphs be given against each item and that standing items are considered, with a sharing of the agenda, and the chance for UCU to ask questions and be provided with info in advance of the JNC. A timed agenda was also proposed by Mr McAllister.

UCU advised that they would come back with their expectations and proposal re forthcoming JNC's.

#### **22.06 Digitisation**

UCU proposed the agenda item following the introduction of new processes re student records. UCU requested an understanding of the spread of the digitisation project and any effect on members' roles. Marking, for example, had moved from an Admin/clerical role to become an Academic task when digitised, with the input of marks onto the system.

Mr McAuley attended to update the meeting on the digitisation project which began in 2018. Mr McAuley advised that the project was in 2 strands. Strand 1: 85% paper reduction (GDPR; Cost; Labour issues). Strand 2: Taking paper processes and streamlining them. The 2 strands are interlinked. Mr McAuley advised that the project runs until August 2022, when it is highly likely that an extension will be sought. When the project closes, work will continue as BAU. Marking is not in the scope of the digitisation project.

Mr McAlister to find out who is leading/has led on the marking process described, and update UCU.

UCU asked for a timeline of project scope, there are similar projects taking place outside of the digitisation project which are increasing work for academic staff. Mr McAuley to share digitisation project process and projected timelines. Mr McAlister proposed a discussion at the next JNC on items that UCU feel are impacting staff workload. The intention of digitisation is to focus on value-add activity.

#### **22.07 Bilingual policy**

UCU asked about the decision to delay on signage. UCU see the University as abdicating responsibility on this matter.

Mr McAlister advised of an ongoing complaint and so is unable to discuss in detail but did reiterate that the University engage with Irish language groups, including a 'Gaeltacht' type environment for students and staff at Magee. Inclusion is an organisational value. Mr McAlister advised that the Student Union had no mandate in this area.

UCU said that the matter should be progressed as a separate issue, under Equality. UCU said that there is no reason, setting aside the mandate, not to move ahead with celebrating the language and diversity in other parts of the University. The University provides a societal role. Brussels - Gives Irish language an update and the language is seen as a working language in a European context.

Mr McAlister agreed to set up a meeting with Duncan Morrow and Malachy O'Neill present, to discuss further with UCU (Agreed that this would be scheduled for mid-March).

#### **22.08 Timetabling**

UCU requested an update on Timetabling.

Mr McAlister advised that Odette Hutchinson is leading on Timetabling. The element that was GBD only is being rolled out in a wider university approach. Odette will be asked to present on the matter at JUCNC.

UCU requested written information from Odette before the April JUCNC. Mr McAlister to follow up with Odette.

#### **22.09 GBD Move**

UCU requested an update on GBD and a discussion around which issues are to come to JNC.

Mr McAlister advised that block BD is in use for admin and some teaching. Work is on track with contractor handover expected pre-summer, with teaching from the start of the New Academic year 22/23. GBD will be 95% build ready; internalisation is needed and the move of specialist kit approx. May 2022.

The University is working on staff experience and how staff are engaged meaningfully on matters such as support staff move; travel and transport; needs based assessment for parking.

There is a standing agenda item at formal monthly GBD forum to identify items to come to JUCNC or to the H&S committee for discussion, if needed.

#### **22.10 Casualisation**

Mr McAllister will respond formally to UCU within the next month.

#### **22.11 Upcoming Policy reviews:**

There has been an exchange of emails between UCU and Mr Davidson re policy prioritisation and the policy sub-committee. UCU needs to confirm which of their reps will attend the sub-committee. A meeting outside JNC may be useful to discuss this. UCU advised that they were considering the information in the email and would respond.

#### **22.12 AOB**

##### **22.12.1 Library**

UCU advised that they had heard of a library restructure meeting occurring with all staff requested to attend. UCU note their concerns about the Organisational Structural Change Policy which does not involve the Trade Unions until a later stage of the process. Mr Davidson to obtain further information about the staff meeting referred to, and update UCU asap.

##### **22.12.2 Strike deductions**

UCU asked for an update on the request to UU to make strike deductions over a longer period than the 2 months communicated. Mr McAlister to discuss with the VC and will respond to UCU.

##### **22.12.3 ASOS**

Mr McAlister noted his concern at tweets accusing the University of adopting bullying tactics with regards to strike action.

UCU said that the communication regarding pay was perceived as bullying – the University was using strong arm tactics which was disappointing to see. UCU advised that members were feeling entirely overworked and now threatened, which explains the anger.

Mr McAlister said that staff had to be advised of the legal implications re: action short of a strike. If bullying was alleged, UCU could enact the appropriate policy.

UCU asked for a message from the University supporting strike action as happened at the last strike. Mr McAlister advised that activity had been paired back.

Mr McAlister said that he would welcome a conversation around ASOS and what that meant, highlighting the requirement for discussion re: workload, to inform longer term conversations. Mr McAlister committed to speak to UCU before salary deductions re ASOS.

**Meeting ended**